



Lancot Lower School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109518
Local Authority BEDFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 288410
Inspection dates 13–14 September 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs. Helen Ranger

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary	School address	Lancot Drive
School category	Community		Dunstable
Age range of pupils	3–9		Bedfordshire LU6 2AP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01582 667956
Number on roll (school)	320	Fax number	01582 477164
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs. Janet Hughes
		Headteacher	Mrs. Anna Gibbs
Date of previous school inspection	17 September 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–9	13–14 September 2006	288410

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average lower school which takes about half of its pupils from a much wider area than its immediate catchment. About 90% of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The remainder come from a wide range of minority ethnic families and almost all speak English as their first or main language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is quite high and the school offers specialist support for a small number of pupils who have profound emotional and behavioural difficulties. In recent years the school has achieved 'Healthy School' and 'Investor in People' status. The school also offers an 'out of school' club which was inspected separately in November 2005.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Lancot Lower School is a good school that is very popular with parents and pupils alike. It has improved well since its last inspection in 2001 because of the very good quality of leadership of the headteacher and the commitment of a capable staff team to raising standards. Parents' views are summed up by one who commented that it is, 'A school that is always improving and puts the children's needs first'. The school provides good value for money. Many children start in the Nursery with low levels of skill and knowledge, especially in language. The good Foundation Stage unit starts them off well. From then until they leave in Year 4, pupils achieve well in both their personal and academic development because the teaching and curriculum are good. By Year 2 and Year 4, attainment in recent years has been at least in line with national or local averages. In 2006, Year 4's test results well exceeded the county average. A very high priority is given to developing social and language skills. Pupils do particularly well in reading. Action to improve writing standards is having a positive impact and the school is right to aim for further improvement in this important area. Standards in mathematics are satisfactory, but in 2006 very few Year 2 pupils reached Level 3 compared with national averages. The work that has started on helping children to solve problems, including mathematical ones, has given the school a good springboard from which to improve this. The school cares for its pupils extremely well. Pastoral support and the guidance given on behaviour are of high quality and there are good systems for tracking all pupils' progress in their work. As a result, pupils have positive attitudes to learning, get on very well together and are supported to do their best in class. The wide range of physical and social activities and very good guidance for pupils on how to lead safe and healthy lives are laying firm foundations for the future. However, attendance is below average because of the number of term time holidays. This means that some pupils do not make the most of all that the school offers. The headteacher, staff and governors work well as a team. Senior staff in particular regularly check how well the school is doing. They have a clear and accurate picture both of the school's achievements and of what needs to be done next. The pupils' views are taken seriously and help to determine the school's priorities. The school has an exceptional commitment to extending its child care role and its links with other schools and relevant agencies. Schemes such as its 'out of school' club and the 'Living and Learning' project offer pupils and their families a rich and varied range of activities and support. With its current team of staff and governors, the school's potential to improve further is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing further in all age groups, as planned.
- Ensure that pupils in Year 2 achieve Level 3 in mathematics if they are capable of doing so.
- Work with parents to minimise the disruption to children's education caused by term time holidays.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

In the Foundation Stage unit children make good progress, although many do not quite meet the levels expected nationally because they have so much ground to make up from their starting points. The good progress continues and, by both Year 2 and Year 4 last year, pupils exceeded the rigorous targets that were set for them. The test results for Year 4 pupils have been rather erratic in recent years, ranging from below average to above. This is often because of the varying numbers of pupils with learning difficulties in each intake but, for their capabilities, the pupils have made good progress. This includes those with particular learning difficulties and the pupils receiving specialist provision. Analysis has shown that boys in particular need to do better in their writing and the teachers are ensuring that activities meet the separate needs of both boys and girls. At its last inspection, the school needed to improve how well its capable pupils did and to raise standards in information and communication technology (ICT). These areas have been addressed soundly, although more remains to be done to raise the proportion of able pupils who reach Level 3 in mathematics by Year 2.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The good quality of pupils' personal development has its roots in the very good start they make in the Nursery and the Reception year. In this aspect of their work they often reach or exceed the levels expected nationally by the end of Reception. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good throughout the school. They work and play together well, and behave very well. These aspects are supported by the 'playground friends' scheme. Pupils say they feel safe and secure. Excellent opportunities encourage them to develop healthy lifestyles extremely effectively, through a range of physical and social activities and improved healthy eating choices. Pupils actively contribute to the community through the school council. 'We look after our school', said one proudly. They also support charities such as 'Childline' and begin to understand about the wider community as a result. The oldest develop at least average literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. These combine with their very good social skills to support them well in the next stage of education and lay foundations for their future in the world of work. Despite the good efforts of the school, attendance remains below average because some pupils take holidays in school time. This disrupts the progress of these pupils and makes extra work for the staff in trying to ensure that they make up for lost time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. Teachers have a good understanding of their subjects and of national guidance. They mainly match work well to the different needs of pupils within their classes, which enables pupils to learn at a pace appropriate to them. However, the school needs to ensure that its capable pupils in Years 1 and 2 are fully challenged in mathematics. The good emphasis on pupils' personal development and effective behaviour management mean that the great majority of pupils maintain their concentration in lessons and learn well. Teachers rightly focus on speaking and listening to develop pupils' language skills, but sometimes opportunities are missed to follow up pupils' questions or encourage them to explain their thinking, for instance in solving mathematics problems. There are good systems to enable teachers to track pupils' progress and these are especially well developed in the key skills of English, mathematics, science and ICT.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum that promotes good progress. It is planned well in line with national guidance for all age groups. It also provides French teaching from Year 1 upwards. All pupils have the opportunity to learn to swim in the school's own pool. Pupils enjoy a wide range of clubs and have good opportunities to take part in sports and compete against other schools. Clubs cater for interests such as drama, young reporters, bookworms, art and craft, and music. Visits to places of interest, such as museums and the zoo, as well as visitors to the school enrich pupils' learning and increase their enjoyment. There is very good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education which encourages pupils to stay healthy and safe.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school's care and support for its pupils and their families are outstanding and underpin pupils' good achievements. There are thorough procedures for ensuring that pupils are safe in school and for child protection. Staff are highly committed to the well-being of pupils, and pupils say that there is always someone they can turn to if they have a problem. This high quality care extends to the work of the site manager's team who provide a bright, clean environment and the current efforts of the catering staff to provide healthier meals. There is very good support for children with learning difficulties and disabilities and for others who might be vulnerable. The good assessment and tracking systems promote pupils' academic progress and enable teachers to provide appropriate support in class for all pupils, including those with particular gifts or talents. Liaison with middle schools to ensure a smooth transfer at the end of

Year 4 is very strong. The out of school clubs and involvement in the 'Extended Schools and Services Project' give very good further support to families.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is doing well because of good leadership and management. Parents and governors testify to the headteacher's dedication and effectiveness which have created a good staff team. The senior leaders ensure that the overall workload is delegated well. Staff with responsibility for subjects and other important aspects of school life are developing their monitoring roles well. They have opportunities to develop professionally and all aspects of the school are monitored thoroughly. Consequently, there is a clear direction and focus for school improvement. Staff are prepared well to take on additional responsibilities and promotion as their careers progress. The school is committed to welcoming and catering for all pupils, whatever their needs. A strong aspect of the school's aims is the focus on working ever more closely with families and the wider community. In this, the staff work alongside active and well informed governors. The governing body is led very well by a very experienced chairperson. Governors are both supportive and questioning and act well in their role as 'critical friends'.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

15 September 2006 Dear children Lancot Lower School, Lancot Drive, Dunstable. Bedfordshire. LU6 2AP This letter is to thank you for your welcome during our recent visit to your school. I hope an adult will give you some help to read this letter if you need it. These are the things we liked best about your school - You enjoy school very much, get on very well together and your behaviour is very good. - You do well in your work in class, especially in your reading. - Your parents think you go to a good school and we agree with them. - Your teachers make sure you all make good progress. - There are plenty of enjoyable activities in lessons and in all the extra clubs and visits the school provides. - You are lucky to have Mrs Gibbs as your headteacher and she works with the staff and governors to make sure your school keeps on improving. There are a few ways that we think your school could make things even better - We would like you all to work hard and get better at your writing because it is such an important skill. - For those of you who find numeracy quite easy, we have asked the teachers to check that you do as well as possible, especially in Year 1 and Year 2. We think you will enjoy lots of challenges and the chance to solve mathematical problems. - Some of you go on holiday during school time. This means that you miss parts of your work. We think the school is right to ask your parents to make sure that you miss as little school time as possible. Keep enjoying all the good things that Lancot Lower School offers you. Best wishes Mrs Helen Ranger and the inspection team